Botticellian Gran Concert

In the four new rooms dedicated to the famous artist and painters from his circle, even the architecture draws on the early Renaissance Florentine tradition. Enhanced are immediate appreciation, comparisons and discoveries through the method of “visual induction”.

The remodeling of the rooms dedicated to Botticelli and the painters from his circle has been a museographic and architectural enterprise equal to the reputation of the artist that gives the rooms their name and of the fetish masterpieces they hold: often (unfortunately) the only reason tourists visit the museum. On the one hand, the dilemma of facing the impact of the crowds, of allowing groups to pause in front of the masterpieces without obstructing the passing flow of the other visitors was exquisitely logistic; on the other, the task was to guide the visitors along a path of immediate and intuitive appreciation favoring spontaneous visual interaction from one painting to the next, suggesting comparisons and highlighting other works of art that are equally magnificent but less well known to the general public.

As part of the project of the New Uffizi, the space (which once occupied in part the Medici Gran Foyer) ...
From Masaccio to Botticelli

The new arrangement of the rooms dedicated to the early Renaissance allows the visitor to trace the progressive development of Italian painting through an extraordinary concentration of masterpieces.

The new arrangement of the group of rooms numbered 8 to 15 has redesigned one of the most important sections of the Uffizi Gallery’s exposition space, a veritable concentration of Florentine Renaissance masterpieces including the works that more than any others in the eyes of the world connote the identity of the gallery, Sandro Botticelli’s Birth of Venus and Primavera or Allegory of Spring. Visiting these rooms is like paging through a survey text in art history, in just a few steps the progressive development of Italian painting is displayed before the visitor, just beside. The references multiply: the cult masterpieces guide the eye towards lesser-known but equally important works of art. The visitor is drawn into a fascinating game of formal and cultural associations that stimulate more in-depth observation and greater involvement.

In the last room, before reentering the eastern corridor, the marvelous, monumental Portinari Triptych by Hugo van der Goes is found. In this hall—which includes the famous Pietà by Kogi—van der Weyden – the Flemish school enters in dialogue with the Florentine: if the material is almost identical, the diverse language immediately makes evident the relationships, the reciprocal influences and the diversity among the artists. Take the splendid Sacra Conversazione from San Giusto alle Mura by Domenico Ghirlandaio, shimmering with colors and light effects: no one better than Ghirlandaio knew how to respond to the taste of the next room which houses the Birth of Venus.

Doing so, and observing the painting, it comes naturally to note that the figure of Zephyr reflects that of the Archangel in the Annunciation opposite it, the nude Venus, floating on the waves, is the sister of Truth in the Allegory of Calumny alongside, who in turn points to the heavens as does Mercury in the Allegory of Spring (Primavera) where the nymphs wear the same flowing draperies as Judith on her way to Betulia depicted in the small painting just beside. The references multiply: the cult masterpieces guide the eye towards lesser-known but equally important works of art. The visitor is drawn into a fascinating game of formal and cultural associations that stimulate more in-depth observation and greater involvement.

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From Masaccio to Botticelli
the *Fortitude* from that series painted in 1469 by the young Sandro Botticelli, it introduces the double space created in rooms 10-14 to house the works by Sandro of which the Uffizi boasts the most numerous collection in the world.

The separation of the *Primavera* and the *Birth of Venus* underscores the diverse provenance of the two works (respectively the town house of the heirs of Pierfrancesco de’ Medici in via Larga and the Villa di Castello), each painted on different surfaces. Among the first works encountered is the detached fresco of the *Annunciation* once in the Hospital of San Martino alla Scala, previously on exhibit in the apse of the ex-church of San Pier Scheraggio and visible to the public only sporadically.

The second part of the exhibition space is dedicated to works of non-ecclesiastic provenance, which include the two large *tondi* dedicated to the Virgin Mary, the *Madonna del Magnificat* and the *Madonna of the Pomegranate*, and paintings of mythological subject matter, such as the *Birth of Venus*, *Calumny* and *Pallas and the Centaur*.

The most striking change, with respect to the New Uffizi project as planned in the past, regards room 15, no longer dedicated to the School of Verrocchio, with works by Leonardo and other masters who trained in the workshop of the great master. Instead, along with another pair of paintings by Botticelli, it now houses a group of Flemish masterpieces known to have been present in Florence at the end of the XV century. In this way, the ordering of works by school that connotes the layout of the Gallery is slightly altered in order to include within the Florentine context, alongside the *Sacred Conversation* of Domenico Ghirlandaio, the grand triptych depicting the *Adoration of the Shepherds* by Hugo van der Goes painted for the church of Sant’Egidio, the *Deposition* by Rogier van der Weyden once in the chapel of the Medici villa of Careggi, the Portinari diptych by Hans Memling, all testimonies to the importance diverse cultures held within the development of Italian art.

Daniela Parenti
In celebrating the tenth anniversary of the organization of the Friends of the Uffizi Gallery, Villa La Pietra hosted the presentation of the restored tapestry from the series the ‘Festivities at the Court of the Valois’, made possible by the generous donation of Veronica Atkins

The tenth anniversary of the foundation of the organization of the Friends of the Uffizi Gallery was celebrated this year in Florence by a special event. During the course of 2016, Claudia Beyer and Costanza Perrone Da Zara of the firm ‘Restauro Tessile’ and collaborators completed the restoration of the tapestry (Inv. Tapestries no. 3, cm 390 x 534) in the restoration laboratory of Villa La Pietra put at the conservators’ disposition by New York University. The tapestry illustrates the lavish court of Catherine de’ Medici (visible in widow’s attire in her ceremonial chair at the center) departing from the Castle of Anet.

On a brisk clear day, from the heights of Villa La Pietra, the Friends - surrounded by the beauty of the Villa’s landscaped and Italian gardens - were able to enjoy the magnificent view, studded with olive and cypress trees, overlooking Florence. The monumental tapestry, newly restored thanks to the generous donation of Veronica Atkins, was put on display in the main hall of the residence, furnished in the eclectic taste of Sir Harold Acton, one of the most passionate of those Anglo-Saxon collectors enamored with the city of flow- ers. Veronica Atkins had already sponsored the cleaning of the Festivities in honor of the Polish Ambassadors (Inv. Tapestries no. 472) and the Attack on the Elephant (Inv. Tapestries no. 474) carried out by the Milanese firm ‘Open Care’.

When she decided to finance the restoration of the last four pieces of the tapestry series, entrusting the job to the skillful hands of Claudia Beyer and Costanza Perrone. The morning’s celebrations ended with a convivial gathering in the Villa’s rustic and fascinating lemon tree greenhouse.

The images of the queen (present in all of the series except one, the Mock Attack on an Enchanted Island) and members of her family who appear frequently in the series, intend at once to glorify the house of Valois and exalt the peace and harmony within the royal family and the kingdom that she diligently governed despite the indomitable internal strife that characterized the times. Widowed at forty-nine years of age, in 1560 Catherine became regent for her son Charles IX (a role she subsequently maintained) while France was ravaged by religious conflicts between Catholics and Protestants.

Following entertainments held at Fontainebleau in 1564 including a Mock Attack on an Enchanted Island depicted in one of the tapestries and other court rituals incorporating tournaments at Fontainebleau and elsewhere, the queen mother with her entire court lavishly adorned in a manner similar to that depicted in the Royal Departure from the Castle of Anet, traveled throughout France for two years, between 1564 and 1566, to present the adolescent king to his people. At the end of the tour, having met with her daughter Elisabeth, queen of Spain, at Bayonne in 1565, three elaborate entertainments were held and represented in the series: The Tournament of the British and Irish Knights in Bayonne, The Joust of the Quintana and The Harpooned Whale in the River Adour. Among the most magnificent festivals is the Masquerade with the Attack on the Elephant, a symbol of the French crown commonly depicted, as seen in a painting.
The atrocious massacre of the Huguenots, which almost coincided with the marriage of Catherine’s daughter Marguerite of Valois to the protestant Henry of Navarre, was followed by the election of Henry as King of Poland in 1573, a role he held for only a year due to the premature death of Charles. The tapestry representing the Festivities in the Tuileries Garden in honor of the Polish Ambassador being received by Catherine and the Royal Departure from the Castle of Anet demonstrate the underlying political intent related to this important diplomatic triumph. After a crucial two years of pacification between 1575 and 1576, in 1578, Catherine undertook another tour of the southern provinces to reinforce the authority of Henry III.

In gifting the Festivities tapestry series as a dowry to her granddaughter Christina, betrothed to the Grand Duke Ferdinando I, Catherine also bequeathed her set of values, her ethos, together with a powerful image of legitimation of the reigning family, without neglecting pride in her lineage as member of a family that had made the primacy of the arts its insignia.

Francesca de Luca

The restoration of the tapestry entitled “Royal Departure from the Castle of Anet” entailed a complex cleaning procedure and the use of experimental techniques

Faced with the numerous complications encountered in the cleaning process and needful of further investigation of the exact nature of the original materials, we requested the consultation of Isetta Tosini of the Opiificio delle Pietre Dure who carried out a number of scientific analyses including stereomicroscopic and optical microscopic examination of the varieties of yarns and metal threads; Isetta Tosini also provided instructions on the correct method to adopt in the cleaning process.

During the complex cleaning procedure, we experimented and adopted cyclododecane to control the bleeding of unstable colors and a chelating solution to remove oxidation on metal threads.

The analyses of the original dyes were entrusted to Ilaria Degano from the Department of Chemistry and Industrial Chemistry of the University of Pisa. Once the cleaning was successfully completed, a meticulous integration of the degraded areas began. The choice to integrate the losses in the weft and the warp of the fabric with yarns that we personally chose, tested and dyed in specific tonalities was coordinated with the Director of Restoration in order to conform to the conservative and aesthetic criteria adopted in the intervention on the first tapestry of the series, the Tournament of the British and Irish Knights in Bayonne, restored between 1998 and 2002. The losses were similarly integrated by modulating the density of our intervention so the losses are visually masked but remain identifiable at close distance.

A lining in dense and light linen fabric covering the entire reverse of the tapestry was fastened with vertical rows of stitches in order to sustain the weight of the tapestry during its vertical exposition. A small area was opened in the lower right backside of the lining to give access to a small window on the reverse side of the tapestry.

The supportive linen strips were remounted so as not to separate the tapestry from this precious testimony of the inventory numbers in the Medicean Collections.

At the conclusion of this complex intervention – directed by Francesca de Luca and executed by Claudia Beyer and Costanza Perrone Da Zara of the ‘Restauro Tessile’ firm in collaboration with Patrizia Labianca, Alice Papi and Irene Caputo, the treated tapestry is now to be found rolled up on a large diameter tube in the Gallery deposits and ready to be put on display!

Costanza Perrone Da Zara

The diagram of the restoration (made by the conservators): blue indicates the weft integrations in wool and silk.

The tapestry Royal Departure from the Castle of Anet, after restoration (photo Giorgio Misirlis).

New light on the tapestry

The tapestry arrived at the Villa La Pietra laboratory in June 2015 with clear signs of degradation typologies common in tapestries: the surface was laden with diffused particles obscuring the total image; the original selvages showed numerous minute losses; signs of abrasion appeared on the light silk thread present in the borders’ background; the majority of brown and black silk and wool threads, found in the accessories and in the footwear were pulverized.

Before beginning the restoration process in its various phases, the tapestry underwent an accurate and meticulous graphic and photographic survey (which in the end totaled 6050 photographs).

Before cleaning, the supportive strips were removed, all components aspirated and fibers tested for solidity. The testing revealed that some red and brown yarns had low resistance to water making cleaning by sections on a low pressure table necessary.
The Second Life of Apollo

The public can once again admire the singular masterpiece of the Seated Apollo, following the restoration sponsored by the Friends of the Uffizi Gallery. The restitution unveils the statue's two artistic seasons, living side by side in full aesthetic harmony: one ancient and the other renaissance and baroque.

Anton Francesco Gori, in his volume entitled “Statuae antiquae deorum et virorum”, his fundamental study on the collection of ancient sculptures property of the Medici published in 1734, does not hesitate to define the Seated Apollo, which had been in the collections of the Medici dukes since the Cinquecento, as “perrarum et elegans”. According to the most famous antiquarian of early eighteenth century Florence, the statue represented Apollo in the act of divination immediately following the killing of the serpent Python, a feat that would give the son of Zeus the epithet of Pythius or Pythian Apollo.

The admiration of the eighteenth century antiquarians was followed by substantial disinterest on the part of visitors and scholars for this very singular and fascinating work, which once belonged to the very famous collection of Cardinal Cesi before it entered the Medici collections. The dust and the thick strata of deposits that over time had come to hide the soft lines of the statue, were the tangible proof of this neglect. The restoration, masterfully carried out by Miriam Ricci with the financial support of the Friends of the Uffizi Gallery, therefore, can rightfully be considered the first and decisive passage in the return of the marble to the attention of the public.

For the first time, in fact, it is possible to have a faithful blueprint of the post-antique components completing the figure, thus allowing for a sound hypothesis on its original aspect and its iconography. In two successive interventions, one in the XVI century and the other in the XVIII century, the work underwent integrations that included the addition of the head, the legs from the thigh to the ankles, the right arm and the upper portion of the cithara. These extensive interventions did not completely destroy, however, the classical iconography.

Thanks to the restoration, we can now affirm with certainty that the cithara effectively existed in origin and that the serpent was not completely the fruit of a modern sculptor’s imagination, but instead had been present at the foot of the God from the ancient period.

Thus, the effigy of an Apollo Musagetes and Pythios is restored, as Gori envisioned it with refined perceptive ability, its spiraling configuration and lithe proportions clearly betraying Lysippean influence. And Miriam Ricci’s restoration not only furnishes the first “blueprint” of the sculpture but also allows for the recovery of its chromatic unity and its aesthetic value that had already impressed Gori. The statue once again reoccupies its century-old designated place in the Third Corridor and can no longer be ignored even by the most distracted of visitors. It is an exemplary case of a work that has lived “a second life”, to use the happy expression of Paul Zanker, being the result of two artistic ages: antiquity and the renaissance and baroque eras, all existing side by side in synergetic aesthetic harmony.

The restoration is another of the innumerable occasions that confirms the special predilection the Amici degli Uffizi (for over two decades by now) and the Friends of the Uffizi Gallery (for ten years) have in regards to the Gallery’s collection of classical statuary the rebirth of which we owe for the greater part to these associations. I believe the name “Galleria delle Statue e delle Pitture” that our museum has recovered thanks to the director Eike Schmidt best confirms the significance of their efforts and, thanks to them, it has been possible to return to the enjoyment of the public not just a simple sculptural “furnishing”, but a fundamental component of the Florentine gallery collections, without which today Vasari’s complex would also be empty of paintings.

Fabrizio Paolucci
New strategies

The General Assembly of the Friends of the Museums and Galleries of Florence held last September brought to light extraordinary prospects in patronage and determined main priorities.

On September 5, 2016, the General Assembly of the Museums and Galleries took place in Florence with the participation of the Italian Minister of Fine Arts and Culture, Dario Franceschini. With the exact same spirit of constructiveness with which past General Assemblies have been convened in times of crisis in order to initiate change, so the Assembly clarified major questions regarding culture in Italy without neglecting the extraordinary opportunities offered on an international scale, determining as main priorities: the true valorization of the cultural patrimony and the widening and increase of public fruition.

Discussions emphasized the need for recognition of the private donor in the conservation and valorization of the cultural patrimony, especially in the face of the notable decrease in public resources. As the Minister himself affirmed, patronage and funding represent cultural benefits for which there has not been adequate acknowledgment in the past.

Although historically ‘patronage’ refers to the activity of generous and illuminated individuals dedicated to the support of the arts and to the protection of those who cultivate them, this is not limited to the economic sphere but also to the will and determination to better the times and the society in which we live.

In all of the many associations that make up the weave of the so very intricate and lively fabric of Italian culture, along with indispensable financial resources, there is above all need for know-how in turning ideas into undertakings that in turn generate economic, social and human values.

New patrons therefore are all those who use their competence and knowledge in the service of collectivity: museum volunteers, professional categories who offer their services gratuitously or private collectors who buy works of art to donate them to the community galleries.

With the call to the General Assembly, the Amici degli Uffizi courageously promoted a debate and proposed the association as the seat of a truly united strategic program: a nationwide consultation that creates an agenda for the future of cultural politics within our country, with a first priority being the rationalization of resources and opportunities.

Much enthusiasm and many contributions were shared, all with a final objective corresponding to the mission statement in our statutes: to increase demand or audience development. Our institutions must in effect focus more and more on continuous interaction with the public, promoting a sense of identity that derives from the cultural patrimony, on which culture-based social cohesion can be built in the future.

Convinced that the General Assembly is an encounter that should be periodically renewed to verify the ‘state of the arts’ and program future initiatives, we set our next appointment for March 2017.

After all culture is “the” common good, and supporting it with every means is an act of civic duty. Besides, can you deny the pride one feels in being defined as a patron of culture? It is priceless.

Maria Vittoria Rimbotti

The director of the Uffizi Galleries Eike D. Schmidt and the president of the Friends of Uffizi Maria Vittoria Rimbotti.
Life at the Uffizi

THE FLOOD AND THE UFFIZI

Sixty black and white photographs commemorate a tragic moment in the history of Florence and its artistic patrimony; the exhibit was opened on November 4, 2016 in Room 41 of the Galleria delle Sculture e delle Fitture degli Uffizi.

The photographs were taken in the emergency and have the immediacy of a spontaneous chronicle documenting the unexpected and immense damages caused by the flooding of the Arno river the morning of November 4, 1966.

All photos have been chosen from the archives of the photographic Department of what was then the Superintendence of the Galleries, one of the most important archives in Italy. The department itself, located then as now on the ground floor of the Old Postal Office on the Piazzale of the Uffizi, was flooded by the waters mixed with mud and petrol; consequently, much was lost in equipment, negatives and photographic prints. The photographers of the Superintendence succeeded nonetheless in documenting the desolating scenario in museums, churches, historic monuments as well as images of figures wading through the layers of mud to give first repair to the damaged works of art.

The Galleria degli Uffizi was hard hit in certain areas: on the ground floor, in the restoration laboratories, but above all in the deposits of the works of art located in various zones of the complex designed by Vasari. And yet, the Uffizi was a primary point of reference for the artistic patrimony of the entire historic center damaged by the flood waters: in the corridors of the gallery damaged works of art from the churches and museums were gathered to be administered the first emergency repairs. The Uffizi was indeed the emergency ward as defined by the then director of the museum Luisa Becherucci – before the “hospital” in the Boboli Gardens’ Lemon Tree Greenhouse was made ready.

Maria Matilde Simari

“Splendida Minima”

The exhibit “Splendida Minima. Small and precious sculptures from the Medici collections; from the Tribune of Francesco I to the treasury of the Grand Duchy”, dedicated to a particular class of artifacts of great artistic value and refinement on exhibit at Palazzo Pitti, has been extended to January 8, 2017.

HOW TO JOIN THE FRIENDS OF THE UFFIZI GALLERY

Membership dues are integral to the mission of Friends of the Uffizi Gallery and because the organization is a 501(c)3 they are tax deductible. For any questions about memberships, donations, corporate sponsorships, planned giving or in-kind donations, please call at 561-289-4090 or email info@amicidegliuffizi.org or visit https://www.amicidegliuffizi.org/memberships/

HOW TO JOIN THE AMICI DEGLI UFFIZI

Supporting the Amici degli Uffizi means becoming a patron of culture and a contributor to the conservation and donation of works of art to the Gallerie degli Uffizi.

Your membership includes:
- A personal membership card
- Free, unlimited and priority entrance to the Galleria delle Statue e delle Pitture degli Uffizi and all of the museums of Palazzo Pitti
- A subscription to our triannual publication “Il Giornale degli Uffizi”

HOW TO JOIN:
- At the Welcome Desk – Galleria delle Statue e delle Pitture degli Uffizi, Entrance 2, Tel +39 055 285610 info@amicidegliuffizi.it
- Directly on our website www.amicidegliuffizi.it/diventa_socio